

December 18, 1973

Baptists Sponsor

Shoppers Find 'Oasis'  
Amid Holiday Rush

By J. Jay Thrasher

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--A Southern Baptist congregation here came up with a Christmas present in the guise of a "Noel Oasis," where weary shoppers were offered coffee, spiced tea, a place to sit and a friendly chat.

It takes something special to become a "perennial favorite" among the unending parade of booths and displays at the massive Jackson Mall Shopping Center, but the 3,600-member Calvary Baptist Church here did it.

The booth was set up for its third year and, from all indications, broke its own record for patronage this Christmas season, according to the church's pastor, Joe. H. Tuten.

The minister said the idea for "Noel Oasis" grew from "a desire to take the ministry of the church into the shopping center and business community."

He continued, "we've gotten an excellent response from the public and from merchants, especially the management," said Tuten. The shopping center draws customers from a 150-mile radius during the pre-Christmas shopping rush. About 7,000 persons visited the Baptist booth this year.

Customers who stopped to chat expressed amazement that the church was sponsoring the project on its own and paying all expenses.

No efforts were made to proselytize persons who visited the booth, but some 200 church laymen, who volunteered for two to four hour shifts, encouraged people to be mindful of the religious significance of the season.

An American Bible Society tract, titled "Do You Know Him?", was also given to individuals stopping at the booth.

"The church unfortunately has, in the minds of some people, the image of always asking. We wanted to give something of ourselves," Tuten said.

Members of the church benefited, along with shoppers. Tuten cited "the joy" the church members gained by being involved in the project.

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J. Jay Thrasher is religion editor for the Clarion-Ledger, daily newspaper in Jackson, Miss.

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Twisters Damage 3 Baptist  
Churches in Ga. and S. C.

12/18/73

By Baptist Press

Three Baptist churches were among buildings damaged as a tornado ripped through Georgia and South Carolina in mid-December, damaging or destroying homes and businesses killing three and causing numerous injuries.

Two Southern Baptist churches, Riverbend Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga., and Coronaca Baptist Church, near Greenwood, S. C., were struck by the twister, as was Morningside Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga., which is not affiliated with the Chattahoochee

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Baptist Association or the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia.

William F. Crowe, superintendent of missions for the Chattahoochee Baptist Association, said the wind did about \$100,000 damage to Riverbend Church, destroying its pastorium and an educational building and causing light damage to the rear of the sanctuary.

No members suffered injuries, according to T. Wayne Cain, pastor of the 500-member congregation, although 21 were reported injured in Gainesville. No dollar estimate was available for the Morningside Church, which sustained extensive damage to the front of the sanctuary and roof and lost its steeple.

The winds swept into central South Carolina, doing nearly \$19 million in damage in Greenwood and Newberry Counties, mostly in the towns of Ninety Six and Prosperity. Between \$2 million and \$3 million in damage was reported in Georgia.

Although no Baptists were reported killed, Richard Moyers, pastor of Coronaca Church, says three church families were wiped out and that the homes of 12 other families were damaged.

The church's steeple blew off and brick-work, roof and windows sustained damage, amounting to between \$6,000 and \$8,000, Moyers said.

A child and two women were killed in the South Carolina disaster area.

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NBC and SBC Commission  
Schedule Joint Productions

12/18/73

FORT WORTH, Tex. (BP)--"Discovery," the first of several joint religious productions by the National Broadcasting Company and the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, will be shown Feb. 3 on NBC stations.

The hour-long special will feature historical sites in the Holy Land sacred to three major religions--Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Scenes include the desert areas through which Abraham and Moses wandered, Mount Sinai where the Ten Commandments were given to mankind, the caves of Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, the Jordan River, the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Olives, Calvary, the Masada where 960 Jews chose death over slavery and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, sacred to Islam.

"Discovery" was produced by Doris Ann, director of religious programming for NBC, with photography by Joseph Vadala.

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